

FOCUS ON WORLD FESTIVALS

CONTEMPORARY
CASE STUDIES AND
PERSPECTIVES

Edited by

Chris Newbold and Jennie Jordan

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Preface

Chris Newbold and Jennie Jordan

Focus on World Festivals has been written and produced to be a companion volume to *Focus on Festivals*, to expand its contemporary case studies and perspectives approach from Europe to festivals around the world. It is hoped that together they will form a major resource for practitioners, scholars and students alike. When we first embarked on this project it was with the intention of providing much needed examples and case studies to the field of festivals study, for at that time many of the issues and debates were clearly extant, but concrete examples and illustrations were hard to come by. Together these two books provide over fifty case studies of contemporary festivals for the reader to refer to.

On the Monday morning following the launch of *Focus on Festivals*, the previous Friday, we sat down and began to discuss potential themes and perspectives, debates and issues that had arisen during the editing process, and to create a wish list of festivals across the globe we would like to be included in a book entitled *Focus on World Festivals*. It was then, with some trepidation that we sent out the first batch of e-mails asking for potential contributions. We need not have concerned ourselves, for the response was instant and overwhelming. Colleagues from around the globe were enthusiastic about the project, and they wanted to be part of it. Thanks to the involvement of an inspiring and insightful group of contributors, including academics, practitioners and festival managers, all of whom think very deeply about their own festivals and the place of festivals in society, this book has been a joy to produce, driven as it has by these colleagues' enthusiasm, dedication and belief in the project.

We hope that readers enjoy engaging with the case studies and theoretical perspectives presented, and that they will find that both these books have achieved their aim of deepening understanding of the festivals sector and its benefits both locally and internationally.

Acknowledgements

The work of compiling a book such as this represents many challenges that are different to the writing of an authored text. The acts of organising, collating and editing a variety of material from a variety of authors presents many and varied challenges, inevitably the endeavour overall owes a great deal to team effort and team support. With this in mind the editors would like to thank all those who have been involved in both *Focus on...* books. It is a truism that without their practical and moral support these books would not have been completed in the timely and efficient manner that they have, and certainly would not have been the enjoyable experience to produce that they have been. As academics, we find that our students play a major role in stimulating our thoughts and discussions, thus we would also like to thank all our students from all over the world who have inevitably played a part in the construction of this book.

We would like to thank the British Arts and Science Festivals Association (BAFA), particularly Kim Hart, for her support and encouragement, and we would also like to acknowledge the European Festivals Association for their help and involvement in both book projects.

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Introduction: focusing on world festivals

Chris Newbold and Jennie Jordan

Festivals are found in every society, on every continent and throughout history. The urge to communal celebration and rapturous experiences is ubiquitous, as the case studies in this book illustrate. Festivity is found in rich and poor societies, quietly under repressive regimes, or exuberantly in state-sanctioned festivals. The irrepressibility of festival causes us to question the belief that festivals are marginal, liminal, at the edges of society. If all societies invest precious resources in this kind of activity – and festivals are, let us not forget, events that are planned over months (Getz, 2010), with costumes made, food prepared, bands rehearsed, parades organised – it would seem that festivity answers a central social or human need. There is not space in this introduction to do more than speculate on what these needs might be, but the chapters in this book provide some hints and indications: tradition, reaffirming shared identity; religion, celebrating the divine through communal experience; and continuity reaffirming social structure and order.

This book brings together 35 different authors drawn from 18 different countries considering festivals in 20 places around the globe; it has over 30 different festival case studies. The contributions from around the world speak to us in authentic voices of their experience of running and reflecting on festivals in their own country. The reader will find that this book has many themes and debates that are similar and familiar regardless of wherever in the world these case studies take place. Thus the book can be used in several ways: first, to examine the variety of festival incarnations that occur across the globe, from those rooted in cultural and religious beliefs and traditions, to those developed to establish a tourist market, or as a promoter of local and national identities; second, to understand the organisational and management processes involved in running different types of festivals; and third, to discuss different types of festivals from ritualistic festivals, art and performance festivals, music festivals, and carnival.

In *Focus on Festivals* (Newbold et al., 2015) we were keen to demonstrate that festivals did not take place in a vacuum, and again we encourage the reader in this more world-based book to consider the importance of context in assessing each of the festivals discussed; as we said “they are the result of a range of social and cultural pressures, organisational and management decisions, and artist and audience expectations” (2015: xv). Alongside this, many of the examples in this book are subject to more national, political and economic considerations as well. By the same token, festival studies itself does not take place in an academic vacuum, and this book can also be used to engage debates and theoretical issues that are current within the field.

In *Focus on Festivals* we identified festivalisation as a key debate in understanding the role of festivals in contemporary society, we particularly drew attention to the role of local authorities and their festivalisation strategies (xxi), and in a major chapter Négrier (2015) reminded us that the process was “deeply differentiated in the events market”, and should not be seen as a “monolithic and linear movement” (25-26). Beginning with the first chapter by Jordan we continue the engagement with festivalisation in this book, since its world focus allows us to consider it alongside globalisation and ‘glocalisation’ debates, as well as in various specific world contexts. The research by Sassatelli (Chapter 5) on the rise of biennials is closely allied to notions of festivalisation. The process of festivalisation can be broadly seen as the process by which festivals have become the favoured vehicle for the delivery of cultural products and a variety of other types of events ranging from food and produce to nostalgia and vintage. Hauptfleisch (2007) talks about how festivals eventify everyday life events turning them into significant cultural events. As he says:

The arguments for the festivalisation of culture in the world today [Kaptein 1996] seems to suggest that the arts festival circuit may actually in some cases have come to represent the theatrical ‘season’ [...] the festivals *are* where plays, performances and other arts events are effectively launched and displayed for the public today. Slogans like ‘As seen at the *Melbourne Festival*’, ‘Newly from the *Edinburgh Festival*’ or ‘The hit show of the *Grahamstown Festival*’ have become a standard and effective part of marketing (39).

The process of festivalisation, as we shall see, is not only concerned with the delivery of the arts, traditional culture and community; festivalisation has become a key element in the endeavours of local governments to act out community cohesion policies and give cultural voices and diversity a platform. Along with urban regeneration and the economic restructuring of cities, the belief in the power and role of festivals to deliver a whole range of social outcomes seems to have continued unabashed.

Connected to the process of festivalisation, it is clear that since the early 1980s a change has been observed (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982) in consumer appetites, where the role of experiences in consumption patterns has come to the fore. In their conception of the ‘experience economy’, Pine and Gilmore (1998) discuss experiences as being active or passive, immersive or absorbing, or creating a balance of all four. Their further work (1999) on retail entertainment districts (RED) cites Las Vegas and Disneyland as examples of the experience economy where everything is designed to create the complete experience and the most important elements are interactivity and the immersive environment. Clearly the large multi-day on-site festivals such as *Glastonbury*, *Exit* or *Burning Man* (see Chapter 6) can come close to achieving a RED-like situation, however most festivals of a local or traditional nature would probably like to think of their event as at least

being an immersive or transformational experience.

The rise of the experience economy can be seen to be a result of contemporary life being lived in and through a mediated and mass mediated world where people come to desire 'real' experiences, physical sensations, and contact with human beings and like-minded people. Festivals can be seen as the perfect deliverers of such 'experiences', as Richards and Palmer say:

...events are excellent vehicles for experience production because they are limited in time and imply co-presence, not just between producers and consumers, but also the co-presence of fellow consumers. The shared experience of cultural events is often what makes them special... (2010: 22)

Co-presence and shared experience, particularly those that are immersive, demands active participation, a point that can be seen to be central to a number of the case studies in this book. Costuming, event production and volunteering are all evident and place the audience at the centre of festivals, as both active participants and part of the experience for others. Such active participation helps to create a sense of community and deepen the memories that are taken away (Pine and Gilmore, 1999, Poulsson and Kale, 2001).

The growing demand for festivals and their success as deliverers of multiple societal functions means inevitably that they can become commodified and have a market value in the 'experience economy'. The pressure to manufacture or stage-manage experiences as part of the festival 'package' is intense, and as we shall see in many of the festivals represented in this book this leads to debates on authenticity and to the consequences of festivalisation. The connection here with the consumer society and consumption is important; festivals are not only single sites of consumption, but through various retail outlets and opportunities provide multiple sites of consumption. It is tempting to recall Marx's work on commodity fetishism (1963) and Adorno's on exchange values in the realm of cultural goods (1991), by recalling his observation that in the world of popular music the price of the ticket becomes more venerated than the concert itself, suggesting that the long cherished wristband, becomes *the* fetishised commodity long after the festival experience has been forgotten. Whilst accepting the wristband as status symbol, we would argue that it is also a personal souvenir, a reminder of the experience that reinforces memories and a marker of shared identity amongst those who were there.

Questions about the societal and personal value of culture have become major issues in public policy in recent years, as governments have sought to rethink their role, often with a view to withdrawing from areas that could be considered non-essential, and commercial cultural activity has become established and legitimated. New Public Management introduced rationality into the funding process, and the requirement to prove and measure the benefit that subsidy produced (Belfiore, 2004). The arts in general have sought to find ways to define and

capture their effects, although many of these efforts have been allied to instrumental projects driven by the need to access funding for cultural activities that are not directly cultural such as health and well-being, urban regeneration or tourism (Gray, 2004, 2007). In 2014 the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) in the UK launched a major research project to “establish a framework that will advance the way in which we talk about the value of cultural engagement and the methods by which we evaluate that value” (Arts and Humanities Research Council, 2014: 3).

In 2015 one of its projects concluded that, “culture and creativity exist in a distinct ecosystem. They feed and depend on each other. The points of connection [...] are where the potential for greatest value creation resides – culturally, socially and economically” (The University of Warwick, 2015: 9). The need to prove the cultural value of festivals, in particular to find a language to express their significance beyond the number of visitors attracted or jobs secured, can be found in the number of chapters concerned with impact in a variety of forms. Although primarily economic, the studies here are also concerned with the wider community and the effects that festivals have on residents’ well-being, whether or not they attend; on social cohesion; and on perceptions of place and place development.

Debates around cultural participation are twofold: definitions, and consideration of who and who does not participate. UNESCO (2006) identifies three types of participation: reception, production and interaction. Reception refers to attendance at theatre, music and dance performances or exhibitions. Production refers to making creative work, often on a voluntary or amateur basis. Interaction refers to the co-creation of work or dialogue between professional arts organisations and individual participants or groups. There are examples of festivals that engage with their communities in each of these ways throughout this book.

Questions of access and engagement have become thorny political issues in many countries as questions have been raised about who is benefiting from public subsidies and whether or not these are a fair reflection of the wider community. Discourse around participation has for the most part centred on the deficit model, which identifies lack of participation in subsidised cultural activity as problematic (Jancovich and Bianchini, 2013; Miles, 2007; Belfiore et al., 2011) and encourages publically funded arts organisations to engage ‘hard to reach’ individuals and communities. As David Stevenson (2015) points out, cultural participation might include all sorts of commercial and community activity that is not publically funded, raising questions about whether or not public authorities should rethink their rationales for funding.

Within these discussions we see an increase in public support for festivals, often justified because of their ability to reach out to communities who do not usually attend arts programmes. Research by the Independent Streets Arts Network in the UK, for example, found that one in ten of the participants at the outdoor

events surveyed had not taken part in any other arts events in the previous 12 months, not even the cinema (The Audience Agency, 2015: 11). Whether it is participating in making costumes, taking part in a parade or volunteering to drive artists to and from the airport, the practicalities of festival production and their tradition of community involvement, make festivals a more egalitarian and open environment that encompass each of UNESCO's participation types.

Clearly participation is a key element in the success and growth of the festival phenomenon across the world, especially at the community level, Picard and Robinson state that:

The explanation for the recent proliferation of festivals is complex, but in part relates to a response from communities seeking to re-assert their identities in the face of a feeling of cultural dislocation brought about by rapid structural change, social mobility and globalisation processes (2006: 2).

Community and identity are central to the discussion of place in festival studies. The idea of the 'local' and 'local identity' being strengthened by events is important (Richards and Palmer, 2010), however the relationship to place is also important to both the resident and the 'visitor', and this may be an ideal of authenticity that both share as part of their expectations of the event. For Richards and Palmer there is a symbiotic relationship with the location where events are held: "the event should strengthen the sense of place of that location, and the location should help to distinguish the event" (2010: 418). The role of the artists in this process is important. Maguire (Chapter 4) in his people-place-purpose triad sees engagement with these elements as central to a festival successfully engaging with and animating a place.

A danger to the connectedness of place and festivals may well be a consequence of the movements towards festivalisation, tourism growth and globalisation, where there becomes a disconnection between the 'local' and the event, as MacLeod says:

a consequent trend towards spectacle and the carnivalesque has become observable, creating festivals that are global in appeal, ungrounded in local identity and demonstrate the characteristics of placelessness (2006: 229).

Connectedness to place is clearly important in the success of festivals and their continued growth. As they are increasingly the arbiters of festivals, it is incumbent on local authorities and municipal governments to ensure that festivals retain their role in place making and do not become pre-packaged consumables driven by place marketing imperatives. There is a role for the touring companies such as *Artichoke* and their spectacular animated creations, in that they bring a global experience to the locality, and as such they are part of the phenomenon of 'glocalisation' that can be observed in much contemporary festival provision.

This book is about how the form and nature of contemporary festivals crosses national borders, and how their role and function is generally recognised in

most locations and cultures. It is reasonable to describe festivals as a worldwide cultural activity, indeed much discussion recognises the 'glocal' nature of festivals. Robertson's adaptation of the Japanese phrase is useful for considering the apparent dichotomy that festivals take place within specific localities *and* increasingly within globalised, some might argue homogenising, cultural industries. The term was coined to

transcend the tendency to cast the idea of globalisation as inevitably in tension with the idea of localisation. I have instead maintained that globalisation – in the broadest sense, the compression of the world – has involved and increasingly involves the creation and the incorporation of locality, processes which themselves largely shape, in turn, the compression of the world as a whole. Even though we are, for various reasons, likely to continue to use the concept of globalisation, it might well be preferable to replace it for certain purposes with the concept of glocalisation. The latter concept has the definite advantage of making the concern with space as important as the focus upon temporal issues (Robertson, 1995: 40).

The notion of glocalisation describes the local interpretation of globalised cultural goods and experiences, and the transmission of local cultures around the world and cultural hybridity, in which local cultures collide and create something new. As the *Galway International Arts Festival* (Chapter 9) illustrates, festivals can therefore be both local and global, authentic or commodified at the same time, depending on who is having the experience.

As part of the 'glocal' dimension, festival imagery with local roots and currency can become iconographic of specific festivals, and indeed of festivals or festivalisation worldwide. An under-discussed aspect of festival studies that appears throughout the book is festival aesthetics or the aesthetics of festivals. Undoubtedly carnival is dominated by the aesthetic and aesthetic experiences – the cover of this book shows how these can be instantly recognisable and instantly attributed to a particular event. Huang in her chapter (8) on the *Taiwanese Lantern Festival* talks about the image of the Chinese festive lantern standing as an icon for the Chinese people around the world. *Dia de los Muertos* and the *Tucson All Souls Parade* (Chapters 23 and 24) feature images of the skull and the aesthetics of death throughout their event, and indeed, these have become the central image motif for these festivals and other Carnivals and events throughout the Americas (see Figure 27.3 for an image of the 'death' at the *Trinidad and Tobago Carnival*). The iconography of *Dia de los Muertos* is so striking that it now features in the opening sequence of the new James Bond film *Spectre*. Clearly the film-makers wanted to use this spectacular festival for its connotations to Bond as an assassin and a bringer of death, but also the iconographic construction and scopophilic nature of film means that the *Dia de los Muertos* festival is perfect for the medium. It could be argued that this is another aspect of the commodification of festivals, where the iconography of events is packaged and sold. As we will see this is

undoubtedly the case in tourism marketing, where the aesthetics of the *Hornbill Festival* and the *Songkran Festival* (Chapters 18 and 19) are used to package and market the events.

Yet festival aesthetics are not always inauthentic, as Debord (1983) argued when he contrasted spectacular with festival. The participatory and experimental nature of festivals demands certain sorts of aesthetic responses: large scale artworks and costumes; immersive sensory environments; participatory events; and site-specific productions that respond to local places and myths. Festivalisation means that there is an increasing familiarity amongst artists and audiences with festival-style culture, which, in turn, is shaping the work being produced. Festival aesthetics can be seen to be influencing theatre, visual arts and music, not just because there is a growing market for these new works, although that is a factor, but also because artists are finding inspiration and engagement in working with and within these forms (Jordan, 2015).

The world festival context in which this book is set can be understood with reference to a number of dimensions. First, there are the festivals and festival organisations with a global reach, *WOMAD*, *Rock in Rio* (Chapter 10), *Burning Man* (Chapter 6) and *Electric Daisies* are all part of an expanding market of festivals with international editions. The second dimension is the globalised formats such as Glastonbury, Woodstock in music festivals and biennials and triennials (Chapter 5) in art festivals. Third, festivals that have 'travelled' via diaspora across the globe, such as *mela* and *Chinese New Year* (see *Focus on Festivals* Chapters 17 and 18) and, as we shall see *Dia de los Muertos* (Chapter 23). Then there are the festivals that are settled in their context. These tend to be rooted in local traditions, but their function can be recognised worldwide, be it seasonal festivals, religious ones and indeed cultural events. Finally there are the 'rehabilitated' festivals and the 'newly created' festivals, that is either older and traditional festivals that have been given a new lease of life by tourist authorities and local government, and the festivals that have been created to meet various impact 'targets'. The idea of the rehabilitation of festivals is introduced in connection to the discussion on Chinese festivals (Chapter 20), however, we would argue that in recent times festivals have been rehabilitated by many societies and cultures. The debates on impact (economic, social and cultural) are central drivers of this rehabilitation, and this acceptance has led to festivity, both traditional and contemporary in origin, becoming more visible and overt.

Journalist and social critic Barbara Ehrenreich (2006) develops the argument that festivity was suppressed throughout the western world in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as a result of the Protestant Reformation. Communal celebrations were perceived as undermining the developing Protestant work ethic and as potential threats to the emerging national power structures. This starts in the west and is exported around the world by colonial authorities that perceived the rites and rituals they found as evidence of a lack of civilisation and self-control,

and therefore would attempt to repress it wherever they found it. As we shall see in Chapter 27, *Carnival* in Trinidad and Tobago emerges as a response to attempts to suppress Afro-Trinidadian celebrations in the 1880s, and that 'playing mas' was related to the role reversal of the *Feast of Fools*, in which plantation slaves would mock their master through masquerading and creating caricatures of the whites and their behaviour. Post-colonial governments, particularly in Africa, attempted to rehabilitate and revive festivals as part of their endeavour to create national identities *FESTAC 77 – The second world Black and African festival of Arts and Culture* held in Lagos Nigeria is an example of this.

In Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries rationality is entangled with notions of class and civilisation that still inform our concepts of art, and comes somehow to explaining the gap found in European cultural policies in relation to festivals. Rehabilitation comes at a price, and the need to rationalise festival subsidies in terms of economics can be seen in the interest in festival impacts reflected in a number of chapters in this book, including Brown (Chapter 7), Snowball (Chapter 14), and van Niekerk (Chapter 15). Rehabilitation comes in many forms. If one of the elements of traditional festivals was the reversal of the established order, albeit temporarily, then we can understand carnival and mela in this light, where the streets are, briefly, handed over to 'others' before being returned to the normative order. In this way, it could be argued the social cultural impact of these festivals has led to their rehabilitation and acceptance on many of the streets of the UK and elsewhere. Undoubtedly the rehabilitation of festivals can be seen as part of the festivalisation process throughout the world, whether it be related to tourism and place marketing, impacts and identity, or simply cultural democracy.

Structurally, *Focus on World Festivals* is divided into three sections, each reflecting the main themes of the author's discussion. The three sections are *Understanding Festivals*, *Managing Festivals: policy, impact and people*, and *Using Festivals: culture and identity*.

In Section 1 we introduce and engage with some key theoretical insights into festivals, looking at the festivalisation of culture, the internationalisation and eventalisation of the music industry and the consequences for festivals; biennialisation of visual art; place-making; participatory festivals and immersive experiences.

Section 2 is concerned with the organising and managing of festivals, looking at local government and festivals; internationalisation; festival team making and volunteering; impacts; audiences and communities.

Section 3 looks broadly at how festivals around the world are used by particular societies, communities, authorities, and individuals for social and cultural purposes. The main themes are festivals and tradition; tourism; festivals in situations of social strife and repression; festivals and healing; festivals and play; and festivals and identity.

Case studies illuminate and add depth to the many viewpoints in this book, but it would be a mistake to think that their particularity means that these examples are not more widely relevant. The emergence of similar themes in chapters considering festivals on various continents highlights the validity and relevance of the analyses and insights for a wider audience. From the discussion of festivalisation and the use of techniques of festivity throughout society in the early chapters, through to the turbulence within the music industry and the challenges of identity facing communities in an increasingly globalised and marketised world in the later chapters, it is clear that festivals reflect many of the issues found within contemporary life. Yet, festivals are also spaces in which new forms of society can be played with, tested, debated and explored. The utopian dream may not survive unscathed, but elements can be seen to be influencing cultural forms, political engagement and social practices, placing festivals at the forefront of contemporary global society.

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